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Heber C
Kimball
(Potter)
in
Nauvoo,
Illinois

Potter became apostle of Jesus Christ

Museum exhibit contains crocks and jug fashioned by Elder Heber C. Kimball

BY GLEN M. LEONARD Director, Museum of Church History and Art

■ This is the last in a series of vignettes about objects in the new Church history exhibit at the Museum of Church History and Art. The exhibit will be completed on May 19.

When Heber C. Kimball's son Solomon donated a small brown jug to the Deseret Museum in about 1870, he said it was the only known pottery still in existence made by the Church leader.

Now, two additional pieces said to be from Heber C. Kimball's potter's wheel in the early 1830s, are preserved at the Museum of Church History and Art, just west of Temple Square.

Two large glazed crocks, decorated with a mottled yellow-brown finish, were acquired in 1984 from Sheldon Fisher's private Valentown Museum in upstate New York.

Fisher was given the large crocks by Belle G. Kyle. She said her grandfather purchased them from the young Heber, who was working as a blacksmith and potter at his farm on the road between the villages of Mendon and Victor.

One of the crocks and the jug are currently displayed with other rare historical objects belonging to early converts to the Church. The pottery, a wood-turning lathe used by Brigham Young, and other items are part of a permanent Church history exhibit, "A Covenant Restored," opening formally to the public on May

19.

Heber Kimball moved to the Mendon area in 1820 to learn pottery from his older brother Charles. Heber had already apprenticed as a blacksmith with his father.

Soon after his November 1822 marriage to Vilate Murray, Heber bought out his brother's pottery and went into business for himself.

As a potter, he sought out quality clay with high silica content, according to Stanley B. Kimball, who wrote a biography of the Church leader. The author said the energetic Heber could turn out 20 dozen milk pans on a hard day at the potter's wheel.

"Apparently he specialized in common brownware made from fine-textured clay burned to a very high degree and covered by a hard brown glaze," Stan Kimball wrote. "It was used mainly for simple kitchen and table items — jars, crocks, pitchers, bottles, mugs, pots, milk pans, cups, churns and plates."

The pieces in the museum collection fit this description.

Though Heber Kimball gave up his potter's wheel to serve the Lord as an apostle, he did not forget the experience of molding clay into useful products. In later sermons, Elder Kimball compared the shaping of his own life by the Lord to the molding of malleable clay by his own hands.

In a variety of life's experiences, he



Photo by Don Grayston

Standing before wood-turning lathe used by Brigham Young, Kirk Henrichsen, exhibit designer, examines clay pot turned by Heber C. Kimball.

explained to audiences, he was shaped on the potter's wheel.

Though Elder Kimball gave up the trade, as a missionary in England he unwittingly helped ensure that other potters would fill the need for earthenware vessels in Nauvoo and pioneer Utah.

Some of the finest pottery produced in Nauvoo was made by English workers from the Staffordshire potteries, where Elder Kimball and other missionaries had converted them. In early Utah, 33 potters were either British or Danish, and only 13 from the United States, ac-

cording to Kirk Henrichsen, a potter and museum exhibit designer.

The Danish potters, who worked in small-scale hand production, were better suited to Utah's economy than the English factory porcelain makers, he noted. Utah's largest pioneer pottery, founded by Danish immigrant Erick C. Henrichsen, survived until 1927.

The products of these early craftsmen are now treasured by collectors, who seek items linked with specific potters, styles or periods.

CHAPTER THREE

... And They Grew and Waxed Strong

When the earth awakens to the call of Spring there is a new breath of life in the air. Trees and plants don colorful new wardrobes and men lift up their heads with fresh courage to face life.

Such was the case in Provo Valley as Spring came in 1860. Those who had endured their first winter in the valley eagerly set out to plant new crops, improve their log homes and visit once again in the lower valleys.

As better weather came, so also did an influx of new settlers. News that grain crops had matured encouraged many to come, and others were anxious to secure homes and water rights while good land was still available. They came for many reasons, but each possessed a pioneering spirit and each heart burned with the desire to carve from the earth a piece of freedom—freedom from want and freedom to worship God.

Before the original group left Provo City in 1859 they had appointed William Meeks as their leader. He never established a home in the valley and so early in the Spring of 1860 William Madison Wall was appointed as presiding elder in the valley. He chose as his counselors John M. Murdock and James Laird. Since all those in the valley were Latter-day Saints they looked to their Church leaders as legislative and judicial officials also.

As summer came in June of 1860 there were more than 200 people living and working in the new valley. The greater part of what was called the "North Field" was put into cultivation and good crops were raised.

Early in July the people began talking about celebrating July 24th in commemoration of the pioneer's entry into Great Salt Lake Valley 13 years previously.

Some suggested that a bowery should be built in which to hold a celebration. However, John M. Murdock, counselor to Elder Wall, said that with just a little more effort a meeting house could be built. This structure would serve not only as a Church but also as a school building, a dance hall, a theatre and for all kinds of community gatherings.

The idea won immediate approval and everyone began to work with vigor on the project. Logs were brought from the hills and stone was quarried for the fireplaces and chimneys. Through the enthusiasm of the people the building was completed on time and used in the "Pioneer Day" celebration.

... AND THEY GREW AND WAXED STRONG

The structure was erected inside the fort string of houses and was 20x40 feet in size. A large open fireplace and chimney was built in each end, large enough to take logs of wood three to four feet long. It was the assignment of the Deacons to keep logs on the fire. Families took turns making and furnishing candles for the meetings.

Even though the building was built of logs and had only a dirt floor and hand-hewn furniture, the people rejoiced for it and gave thanks for its protection and its purpose whenever they met within its walls.

As the little settlement sank its roots deeper into the Wasatch soil the need for a permanent name became apparent. Out of this need grew the name Heber City.

According to the journal of John Crook nearly all the early pioneers of Provo Valley had been converted to the gospel in Great Britain. Since Heber C. Kimball, beloved counselor to President Brigham Young, had been in charge of the first group of missionaries to the British Isles, there was popular acclaim to name the town after him.

When he learned of the decision to name the new community after him, President Kimball came to the town and met with the people. In his remarks he is reported to have said:

"Now you people have named your little town after me. I want you to see to it that you are honest, upright citizens and good Latter-day Saints that I may not have cause to be ashamed of you."

In addition to raising crops and building homes, the people also began to build barns, stables and other shelters for their oxen and cattle during the coming winter.

Because the animals grazed on open range lands during the summer months it also became necessary to build fences around the various sections of land that were under cultivation so that the cattle would not ruin the precious crops.

The need for fences gave rise to a curious political office—that of fence viewer. These officials were elected and given authority to compel people, if necessary, to build and keep in repair their fences. Estimates were made and it was determined that a rod of fence for each acre of land was required to enclose the field. Each person was responsible for his own land and fences. The most common type of fence was the "worm fence" or zig-zag construction that required no nails or wire to build.

Everyone was kept extremely busy during this time in making roads into the canyons so that fence poles could be brought out and logs could be obtained for building. Hay also had to be provided from the range lands for cattle during the long winter.

As harvest time came the early frosts again plagued the people. Even though the frosts caused the wheat to shrink somewhat, it was still suitable for flour. It was during the harvest season in 1860 that the first threshing machine was brought into the county.

Two men, identified only as Smith and Bullock, brought the machine